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AUTHOR Brown, David L.
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ABSTRACT

Demographic and socioeconomic conditions and changes in rural communities provide the context for education programs in such areas. Although these conditions have improved since the 1950s, they have worsened since 1980, affecting the human resource base of rural economics. Cyclical and structural changes affect--and are affected--by: (1) reduced nonmetro population growth and migration (significantly less than the 1970s); (2) a slow recovery from the 1979-82 recession (leading to higher unemployment); (3) population composition changes (an overall aging of the population); (4) more traditional family structure than the metro areas; (5) difficulty in attaining formal education; and (6) the changing dimensions of rural poverty. Nonmetro areas dependent on agriculture, mining and natural resource industries are experiencing severe economic stress in the 1980s compared with the boom conditions of the 1970s. Consequently the population and employment growth of the 1970s has reverted to nonmetro outmigration and very slow economic growth. Educational policymakers should therefore plan for sluggish growth or decline--not for rapid or even average growth--in the demand for traditional elementary and secondary education. Further, nonmetro diversity mediates against "one size fits all" policies. References and data showing population changes, migration, unemployment and poverty rates, age distribution, and educational attainment are appended. (JMM)

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Demographic Trends Relevant to Education in Nonmetro America

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David L. Brown Associate Director1/
Agriculture Rural Economy Division
Economic and Research Service
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INTRODUCTION

Our Nation's population is overwhelmingly metropolitan, yet more than 56 million of our citizens -- about one quarter of the population--now live in nonmetropolitan counties (1986). Accordingly, nonmetro issues are of direct concern to a substantial part of our population. And, it should be noted that these 56 million persons are spread across 2000 of the Nation's 3100 counties, making nonmetro issues a concern in nearly all regions of the country.

Demographic and socioeconomic conditions and changes in rural communities provide the context for educational programs in such areas. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to describe some aspects of rural conditions in the 1980's, and to point out how they differ from the 1970's. The general perspective taken in this paper is that measures of the demographic and socioeconomic conditions of nonmetro areas are important in assessing the need for continued public programs to nonmetro areas, while information on metro-nonmetro

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1/ Presented at the Rural Education Symposium sponsored by the U. S. Department Education, March 30, 1987.

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differences provides the principal justification for separate (or separately administered) metro and nonmetro policies. And, changes in the diversity of conditions among nonmetro areas themselves provide a rationale for targeting assistance to areas of greatest need and/or opportunity.

NEW DEMOGRAPHIC FORCES SHAPING RURAL EDUCATION IN THE U.S.

Regardless of one's perspective, whether it be economic, social, or demographic, present day nonmetro America bears little resemblance to the 1950's. Population size, growth and composition; the industrial and occupational structure of the rural economy; the general level of living and/of socioeconomic well being; and perhaps most important of all the linkages binding nonmetro and metro economies and communities together have all been significantly altered during this period.

Socioeconomic conditions in nonmetro America have generally improved compared with three decades ago, and metro-nonmetro differences, while still present and important, have diminished greatly. Nonmetro America, once an adjunct to the mainstream of American life is now closely integrated with national events. However, given this general appraisal, nonmetro economic conditions worsened significantly since 1980.

If nonmetro revitalization was the theme of the 1970's, economic stress is the overriding nonmetro issue of the 1980's. This stress is

associated with both cyclical trends, such as a slow recovery from the 1979-82 recession, and with basic changes in the structure of the nonmetro economy including very slow growth in manufacturing employment because of greater import competition and enhanced labor productivity due to technological change.

These cyclical and structural changes affect, and are affected by, the human resource base of rural economies. It is here that the interface of sociodemographic change and educational policies is clearest. The changing size and composition of the nonmetro population is both a determinant and a consequence of economic conditions. Accordingly, trends and changes in the nonmetropolitan population are now described and their determinants and consequences are briefly discussed.

Reduced Nonmetro Population Growth and Migration

The relative rates of metro and nonmetro population growth and net migration reversed from their traditional pattern of increasing urbanization to favor nonmetro areas during the 1970's. The "population growth turnaround" was one of the most surprising and significant demographic events of the decade. For the decade as a whole, the annualized nonmetro growth rate was 13.5 per 1000 compared with 10.1 per 1000 for metro areas (table 1). The pervasiveness of the turnaround can be judged by the fact that the rate of nonmetro population growth increased in all four census regions, and the nonmetro rate exceeded that of metro areas in all regions but the South. Moreover, nonmetro growth increased in areas separated from

direct metropolitan contact as well as in counties adjacent to metro areas and smaller areas grew more rapidly than larger areas indicating decentralization among nonmetro areas themselves. Research conducted during the seventies clearly indicated that both economic and noneconomic factors were responsible for the nonmetro population revival (Fuguitt, 1985). An increasingly diversified and revitalized nonmetro economy, community modernization, and deeply held preferences for rural living all figured in the migration reversal.

Nonmetropolitan growth began to slow by the end of the seventies (Richter, 1985). Post-1980 county population estimates indicate that nonmetropolitan areas are now growing at a lower rate than metro areas. The data indicate that the annualized growth rate for nonmetropolitan areas declined from 13.5 per 1000 during the 1970's to 7.4 per 1000 in 1980-85. In contrast, the metro rate has increased slightly from a little over 10 per 1000 in the 1970's to 11.5 per 1000 during 1980-85. Although nonmetro growth slackened during the late 1970's and early 1980's there was no net outmigration until 1982-83. However, current data show a nonmetro net migration loss to metropolitan areas (MSA) of about 632,000 persons between 1985 and 1986 (table 2). Accordingly, reduced nonmetro growth of the 1980's may signal a return to the generalized decline of previous decades. Almost half of all nonmetro counties (1160) lost population during 1983-85, compared with 460 that lost population in the 1970's. During the 1960's 1300 lost population. Nonmetro population decline is still concentrated in the Plains and Western Corn Belt, but has also spread to the lower Great Lakes and to parts of the South (Appalachia, Delta,

Texas Plains) during 1980-85 (figure 1). However, the rates of decline experienced by these areas are significantly less than in the 1950's. Thus the most recent nonmetro losses are equivalent to the average annual losses in the 1950's, higher than those of the 1960's, and a significant departure the growth of the 1970's.

The return to slower nonmetro growth poses important questions about future nonmetro economic progress, community viability and the need for and support of essential services such as education. Reduced growth is associated with economic problems such as delayed recovery from the 1979-82 recession, financial stress in agriculture and its linked industries, the slow growth or decline of nonmetro manufacturing and natural resource-based industries, and possibly a diminished appeal of nonmetro areas as residential locations. Space limitations do not permit a discussion of all of these issues, but a brief discussion of nonmetro recovery from the recent goods-producing recession is instructive of the nature of nonmetro economic stress during the 1980's.

Recovery from the 1979-82 Recession:

Prior to the 1970's, the nonmetro unemployment rate was lower than the metro rate--remaining below the metro rate throughout recession and recovery. The most recent recession represents a significant break with that pattern. The nonmetro unemployment rate rose more rapidly than the metro rate, peaked at a higher level, and has remained above the metro rate throughout the 1980's (table 3). Employment in timber

industries fell as new housing starts declined. Many rural manufacturing plants were linked to the struggling auto and steel industries. And mining and other energy exactractive industries once again suffered a severe contraction. The textile, clothing and leather goods industries, which are concentrated in nonmetro areas, also suffered from enhanced import competition during this period. In addition, nonmetro areas were more heavily affected by involuntarily shortened work weeks, and a higher percentage of nonmetro workers became discouraged from looking for work than was true of metro workers. Both of these factors contribute to a greater underestimation of the unemployment rate in nonmetro than in metro areas, as shown by the adjusted rates in table 3.

Nonmetro areas have recovered from the recession less rapidly than metro areas. In fact, the data in table 3 show that the nonmetro unemployment rate actually increased between 1984 and 1985 while the metro rate declined. As of 1985, the official nonmetro unemployment rate remains 1.5 percentage points above the the metro rate and the difference in adjusted rates is 3 percentage points. Most of this difference is explained by the poor performance of the nonmetro manufacturing sector which lost 450,000 jobs in the recession and only regained about 20,000 jobs between 1982 and 1983 in the early part of the recovery. Improved performance of this sector seems to be the key to future development for many individual areas. However, the issue may be more complex--requiring a transition to a post-industrial, service producing economy, or success in capturing a different mix of manufacturing activities than fueled the rural growth of that sector

in the 60's and 70's. Poor economic performance in nonmetro areas is a cause of slow population growth or decline and outmigration, and contributes to low income and high poverty rates experienced by nonmetro households.

Changes in Population Composition

Decisionmakers including those concerned with education are increasingly recognizing that information on demographic composition in addition to that on population size and change, is essential for carrying out their responsibilities and planning for the future. Age composition, household structure, and educational attainment have particular relevance to nonmetro educational policy.

Age Composition:

In 1987 the median age of the U. S. population is estimated to be 32 years, a decade older than in 1880. This increase was brought about by a diminished proportion of children and an increasing proportion of elderly persons. Youth and infants comprised 44 percent of the Nation's population in 1880 and elderly persons only accounted for about three percent. In 1987 the infant and youth population has declined to less than 30 percent, and over one in ten Americans is age 65 and older. These changes in age composition we associated with changes in the demand for formal education.

Nonmetro areas have traditionally had a higher proportion of children, relatively fewer younger adults and middle aged persons, and larger proportion of the elderly. These residential differences have been accounted for by a higher level of fertility in rural areas, outmigration of young adults, and both inmigration of older persons and aging-in-place. These residential differences still persist, although both metro and nonmetro areas have been similarly affected by major demographic events of the last quarter century. The data in figure 2 show that the decline in the population proportion under 15 years of age is pronounced in both residential categories, and is associated with the current prolonged period of low fertility. These data indicate diminished growth in demand for primary and secondary education compared with growth in demand for other age-related services.

Nonetheless, the nonmetropolitan population in 1980 still had a larger proportion of infants and children than was true in metropolitan areas. Accordingly, nonmetro areas still have proportionately greater need for elementary and secondary education. In contrast, because of aging-in-place and net inmigration of elderly persons from metropolitan counties, the nonmetropolitan population appears to have aged more than the metropolitan. And the working age population grew somewhat more rapidly in metropolitan areas because the baby boom was more dramatic there, and because metropolitan areas are still gaining young labor force age migrants from the nonmetropolitan population.

Projections prepared by the Census Bureau indicate that the Nation's population is in store for a substantial aging, and there is every reason to expect this to take place in both metro and nonmetro areas. In 2030 the proportion under age 65 will have virtually stopped growing while the number of persons 65 and older will increase sharply beginning in 2010. This is because of movement through the age structure of the large cohorts born between 1946 and 1964. The aging of the baby boom generation will push the median age to about 41 years in 2030 (compared with 32 in 1987). In that year 21 percent of the population will be age 65 and above and 3 percent will be 85 or older. Relatively small changes in the sizes of younger age groups combined with substantial increases in the elderly population will yield equal numbers of the very young and old (U. S. Bureau of Census, 1984). These changes will have broad ranging implications for the need of and demand for goods, services (including education) and economic opportunities and they will affect patterns of consumption, life style and social and political behavior. The proportionate demand for education will be less than currently is the case and service needs of older persons will be greater.

Household Composition:

Changes in household structure are of critical importance at the local community level. For example, since the family is the institutional unit in which childbearing is expected and condoned, a reduction in married-couple households has important implications for childbearing (and age structure) and for goods and services associated with

children (principally education). An increase prevalence of single-parent, most female-maintained households with children implies that the need for public assistance to such householders and their children may be growing in an area. Day care, income maintenance and special educational programs may be increasingly necessary.

Data from the U. S. Census of Population demonstrate that nonmetro areas continue to be characterized by more traditional family type living arrangements (Fuguitt et al., forthcoming 1988). Nonmetro areas continue to have a higher proportion of married couple households with minor children, a smaller proportion of single-parent families, and a much lower proportion of persons living alone. On the other hand, both rural and urban areas experienced similar changes in family living arrangements of households during the 1970's. And since some of the principal factors associated with metro-nonmetro differences in family structure have moderated -- fertility, age at marriage, conservative attitudes toward family and the role of women -- it appears that residential differences in family structure will moderate as well. For the present, however, even in an era of diminished childbearing and population aging, nonmetro households continue to have a more traditional structure which will contribute to somewhat higher fertility and consequently proportionately higher demand for education than is true in metro areas.

Educational attainment:

In discussions about rural economic development, nearly everyone has concluded that a high quality work force is a critical asset. New cohorts entering the workforce must be properly prepared, current workers must maintain their skills and employability and displaced workers must be provided with skills to facilitate their transition to new jobs. The data in figure 3 show that formal educational attainment has increased substantially in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas during recent years. The metropolitan median increased from 11.1 to 12.6 years between 1960 and 1980, and the nonmetropolitan median increased from 9.3 to 12.3 years.

However, the seeming convergence in these medians masks differences in attainment between the residence categories. Continuing and even growing residential differences in formal educational attainment are apparent when one focuses on completion of high school and college rather than on median years completed. The proportion of the population 25 and over that completed high school has risen substantially since 1960 in both metro and nonmetro areas, but the residence gap in this level of educational attainment has persisted at about 10 percentage points. The percentage of the population age 25 and over that completed college also increased in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas since 1960, but the residence gap in college completion has actually increased. The proportion of the adult nonmetropolitan population that has completed college in 1980 is about the same as the metropolitan percentage a decade before — about one

in 10 persons. The persistence of the difference is partly attributable to nonmetropolitan net outmigration of young adults with college degrees (even during the 1970's turnaround era). These residential differences are even more marked for racial minorities.

Job upgrading and lifetime learning are new concepts for the economy and they are not easily measured in conventional data sets. Accordingly, we do not know the extent to which workers continuously upgrade their skills to maintain employability in the rapidly changing economy. Many firms view upgrading as an externality — a cost or benefit that must be borne by society at large rather than the individual firm (Kuttner, 1987). Accordingly, without some kind of government subsidy it is unlikely that most firms will provide adequate training for their workers to maintain their occupational levels during periods of rapid technological and/or organizational change. This is a critical issue for displaced workers and for those who maintain employment, but who are at risk of downward occupational [and income] mobility.

Changing Dimensions of Rural Poverty:

A disproportionate share of the Nation's poor have resided in nonmetro areas throughout this century. The latest data available from the Census Bureau, the Current Population Survey, and other sources all indicate that this situation persists today. In 1985, the poverty rate of the nonmetro population was 18.3 percent compared with 12.7 percent for their metro counterparts (figure 4). Even when in-kind

transfers are included with other income, 13.2 percent of nonmetro people failed to have enough income to meet minimal basic needs--the official definition of poverty. In metro areas the comparable figure was 9.3 percent. While poverty rates declined during the mid-1970's, both metro and nonmetro rates have risen since the 1979-82 recession, and were substantially higher in 1985 than a decade before (Deavers, et al. 1987).

Not only is poverty more prevelant in nonmetro areas, but the characteristics of the nonmetro poor differ from those of poor persons in metro areas. The nonmetro poor are more likely to be elderly, white and to live in the South than is true of the metro poor. Labor force attachment is much higher in poor nonmetro families. Over two thirds of the nonmetro poor families had at least one worker in 1985, and over one-fourth had at least two workers. In metro areas only 58 percent of poor families had even one worker.

The composition of poverty has changed during the last decade. Some of these compositional changes serve to further differentiate the nonmetro and metro poor, but most changes have affected metro and nonmetro areas alike (table 4). Changes in the age and family composition, and regional location of poverty are especially notable. Since 1973, the poverty rate among older persons has declined from 16 to 14 percent, while the rate for youths increased from 14 to 22 percent. This reversal was experienced in both metro and nonmetro areas — in nonmetro areas aged poverty fell from 23 percent to 18 percent and the rate for youth increased from 17 to 24 percent. Two

important reasons for the improved income position of older persons are the initiation of the Supplemental Security Income program which established a nationally minimum benefit level for needy elderly, disabled and blind people; and the indexing of Social Security for inflation beginning in 1974.

The overall economic improvement of elderly persons masks important differences among subgroups of the aged population. The elderly as a group have gained in average income because new cohorts entering the older age groups are more affluent than their predecessors. The older elderly, in contrast, have experienced declining cash income. And it should be noted that the oldest of the elderly population (those 80 and over) are disproportionately located in nonmetropolitan areas, and the nonmetropolitan elderly only have three quarters of the income of their metropolitan counterparts (Glasgow, forthcoming, 1987). So the income position of the rural elderly continues to be an important social welfare issue.

The diminished economic position of children is related to changes in household and family structure, and especially the increase in families maintained by women with no spouse present. The greatest share of the Nation's poor (45 percent) live in married couple families, but over one third live in female-headed single parent units. The poverty rate among these households is substantially higher than for other family types. This is true in both metro and nonmetro areas, but especially in nonmetro areas where the poverty rate is 43 percent for female-maintained families compared with 13

percent for other family households. And, 58 percent of nonmetro children living in female-headed families are poor compared with 18 percent of children in living in other family types. The child poverty rate has increased for all residence and family types since 1973.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Educational policy is set in a sociodemographic context. Changes in the number and kinds of persons living in various areas affect the need for and demand of education services. This paper has demonstrated that nonmetropolitan America has been slow to recover from the 1979-82 goods-producing recession, and that nonmetro areas dependent on agriculture, mining and other natural resources industries are experiencing severe economic stress in the 1980's, especially when compared with boom conditions of the 1970's. Nonmetro manufacturing growth has also been very sluggish during the eighties decade. All of these conditions contrast sharply with the 1970's decade of rural revitalization. As a consequence, the population and employment growth of the 1970's has reverted to nonmetro outmigration and very slow economic growth. Accordingly, educational policymakers should be planning for sluggish growth or decline not for rapid or even average growth in the demand for traditional elementary and secondary educational service.

Not only is the size of the nonmetro population stagnant, but the composition is changing in ways that will also reduce the growth in

demand for conventional educational services. In particular, the population is aging. By the year 2030 the Nation's population will contain as many elderly persons as school age individuals. Nonmetro areas have proportionately more youth than metro areas, but the overall aging of the population will affect nonmetro and metro areas alike, moderating growth in demand for elementary and secondary education.

The industrial transformation of nonmetro economies, and associated worker dislocations, affects the need for worker retraining and employee assistance. In fact, the mix of demand for educational services will undoubtedly change in the decades to come--formal classroom education will decline in relation to the need for continuing education and worker retraining. The pace of industrial transformation will probably increase in the future. No longer can a worker expect to apply the same skills throughout his/her professional life. Continual retraining will be necessary if workers are to avoid downward mobility. Accordingly, nonmetro communities should be redirecting some of their resources from traditional formal education to continuing education, job retraining and lifetime learning programs.

Nonmetro areas, as well as the Nation as a whole, are faced with changing demands for educational services. On the one hand changes in population size and age composition are diminishing the demand for traditional services, while on the other hand industrial restructuring and associated worker dislocations are enhancing the demand for less

conventional educational and training programs. In nonmetro areas the situation is exacerbated by below average personal and household income and recessionary conditions in natural resource-based goods producing industries. As a consequence, many nonmetro communities are finding it increasingly difficult to fund the needed services. Federal assistance, for example the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) provide some assistance, but the fiscal resources available to local rural communities are strained by current economic conditions. In addition, the smaller size, more dispersed settlement structure and greater geographic isolation of nonmetro communities constrain possible cost saving economies of scale, and contribute to higher per pupil costs of providing educational services.

In conclusion, the quality of human resources in a local economy is strongly related to its success in today's highly competitive economic environment. To be competitive, nonmetro areas must provide educational services to new labor force entrants, to current workers who desire to maintain their skills or adapt to changing industrial processes, and to dislocated workers. Planning for the apropriate mix of these services can be informed by data and analysis on the changing size and composition of the nonmetro (and metro) population. These data should be made available for small geographic areas, since the diversity of nonmetro conditions mediates against "one size fits all" type policies.

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Table 1: Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Annualized Population Change per 1,000, 1960-85.

	1960-70	1970-80	1980-85
U.S.	12.7	10.9	10.5
Metro 1/	16.1	10.1	11.5
Nonmetro	2.5	13.5	7.4

Source: Beale and Fuguitt, 1985; 1985, data U.S. Bureau of Census, unpublished.
1/ Metro Areas as defined in 1970.

Table 1 -Metropolitan-Nonmetropolitan Migration in the United States, 1980-86

Migration Stream	1985-86 (000)	1983-84 (000)	1982-83 (000)	1981-82 (000)	1980-81 (000)
Metro-to-nonmetro	1,807	2,258	2,066	2,366	2,350
Nonmetro-to-metro	2,439	2,609	2,088	2,217	2,156
Net to nonmetro	-632	-351	-22	149	194

Note: For 1980-83 Metropolitan areas are as defined in 1970; 1984 metropolitan definition used thereafter (noninstitutionalized population).
Source: Current Population Survey Bureau of the Census
Prepared by Economic Research Service, USDA

Table 3—Nonmetro and metro unemployment rates 1973-85
annual average unemployment rate percent

Year	Nonmetro		Metro 2/	
	Reported	Adjusted 1/	Reported	Adjusted 1/
85	8.4	13.0	6.9	9.9
84	8.1	12.2	7.3	10.4
83	10.1	14.9	9.4	13.1
82	10.1	14.9	9.5	13.1
81	7.9	11.5	7.5	10.3
80	7.3	10.7	7.0	9.5
79	5.7	8.5	5.8	8.0
78	5.8	8.8	6.1	8.4
77	6.6	9.8	7.3	9.3
76	7.0	10.2	8.0	10.6
75	8.0	11.6	8.7	11.5
74	5.1	7.9	5.8	7.9
73	4.4	7.1	5.1	7.1

1/ Unemployment rate adjusted to include discouraged workers and one-half of the workers employed part-time for economic reasons.

2/ Metro area delineation was updated in 1985 and is not directly comparable with earlier years in data series.

Source: Bureau of Census, Current Population Survey.

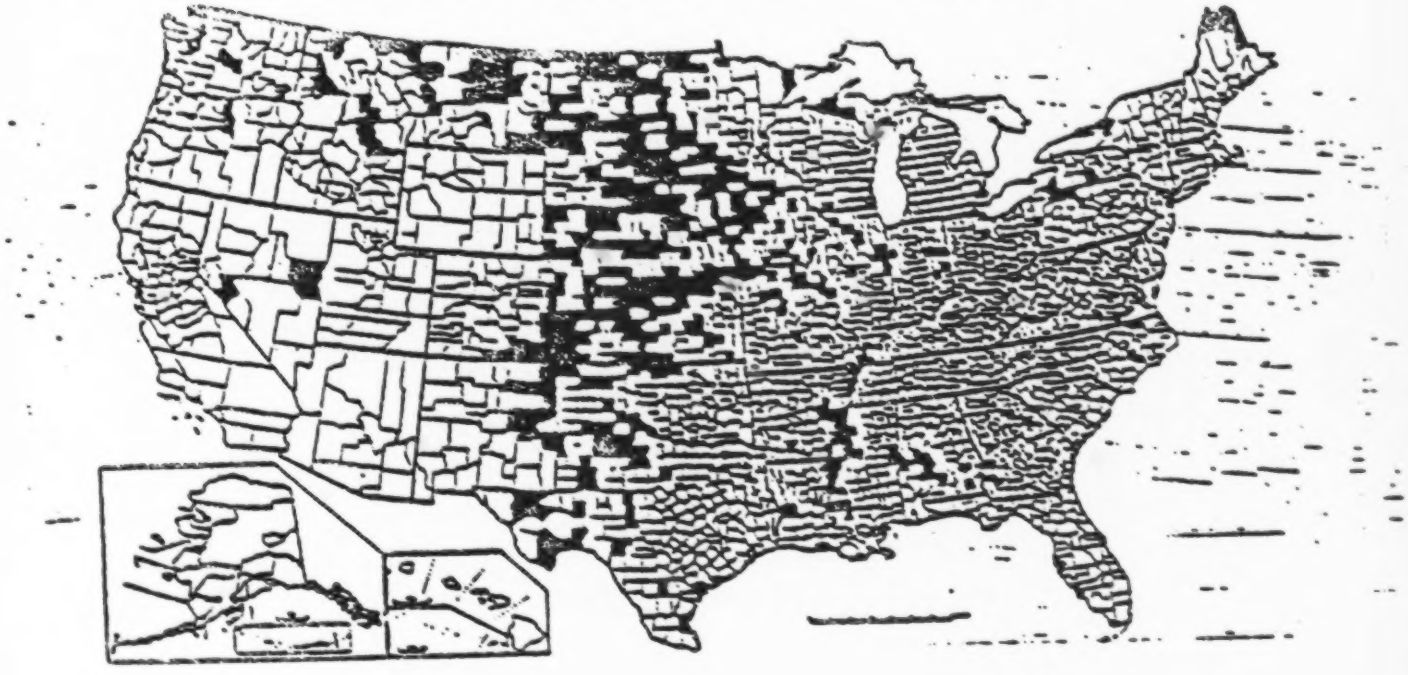
Table 4-Selected characteristics of the Poor by Metro Nonmetro Residence, 1973-1983.1/

Item	U.S.		Metro		Nonmetro	
	1973	1983	1973	1983	1973	1983
Poverty Rate for:						
Total population	11.1	15.2	9.7	13.8	14.0	18.3
Children in households with female householders, no spouse present	52.1	55.4	51.8	54.5	52.9	58.0
Blacks	31.4	35.7	28.2	33.4	41.1	43.3
Aged	16.3	14.1	12.7	12.1	22.5	17.8
Farmers	13.4	23.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Percentage of Poor who are:						
Children in households with female householders, no spouse present	22.5	19.0	27.7	22.1	14.8	14.8
Whites	65.9	68.0	61.4	63.3	72.6	75.5
Blacks	32.2	28.0	36.3	32.3	25.9	21.2
Aged	14.6	10.5	12.1	9.3	18.4	12.4
Farmers	5.6	3.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Householders working full time	18.3	16.9	15.5	12.9	22.2	23.3
Percentage of poor families with:						
no workers	38.1	40.5	42.4	46.1	32.1	31.8
two or more workers	20.0	20.7	15.7	15.4	26.1	28.9

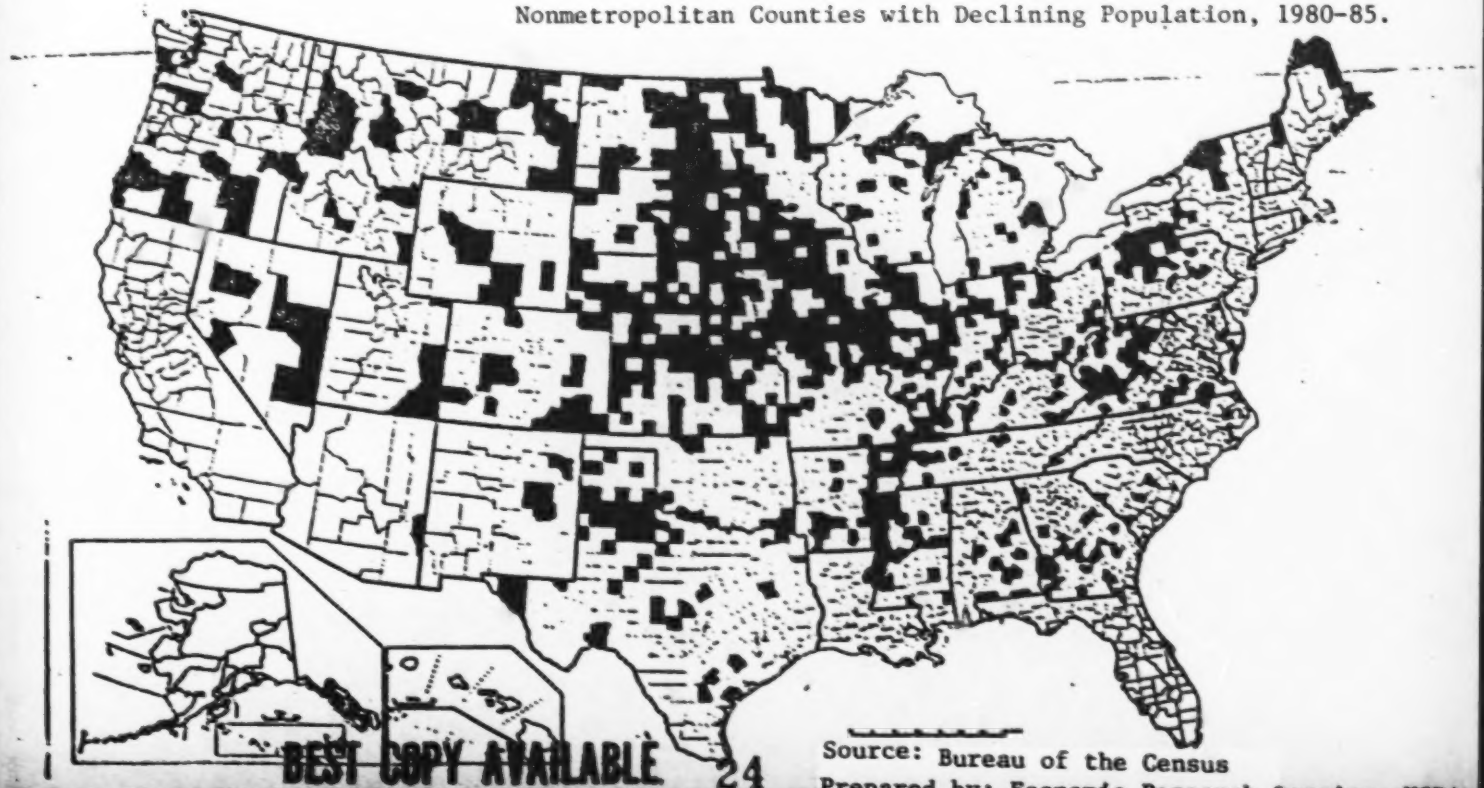
Source: Current Population Survey.

1/ Metropolitan areas as defined in 1970.

Fig. 1-Nonmetro Counties With Declining Population, 1970-80.



Nonmetropolitan Counties with Declining Population, 1980-85.



Source: Bureau of the Census
Prepared by: Economic Research Service, USDA

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Figure 2A Age Distribution of the Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Populations, 1980.

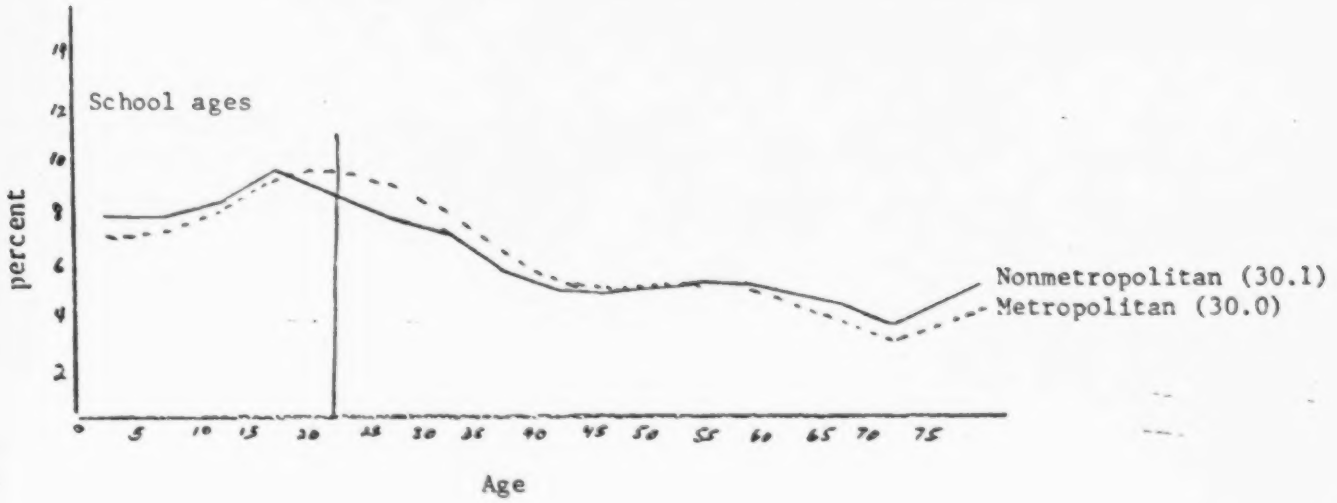
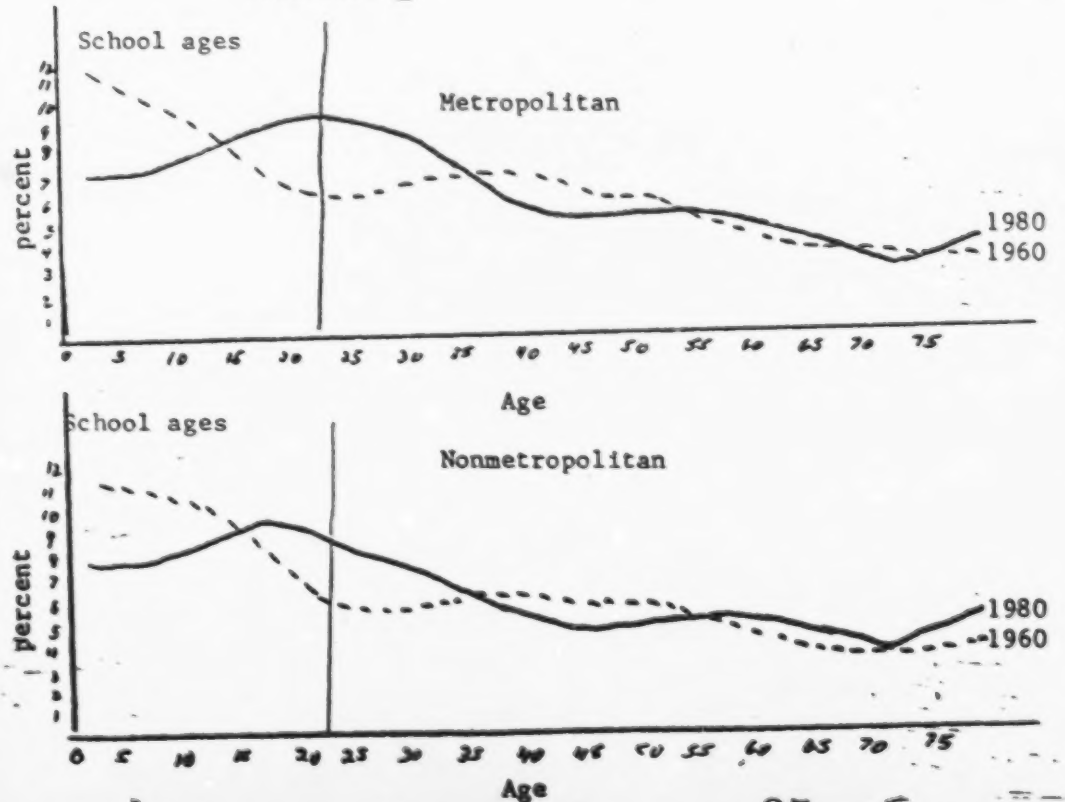


Figure 2B Age Distribution of Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Populations, 1960-1980 1/



1/Metropolitan as defined in 1980

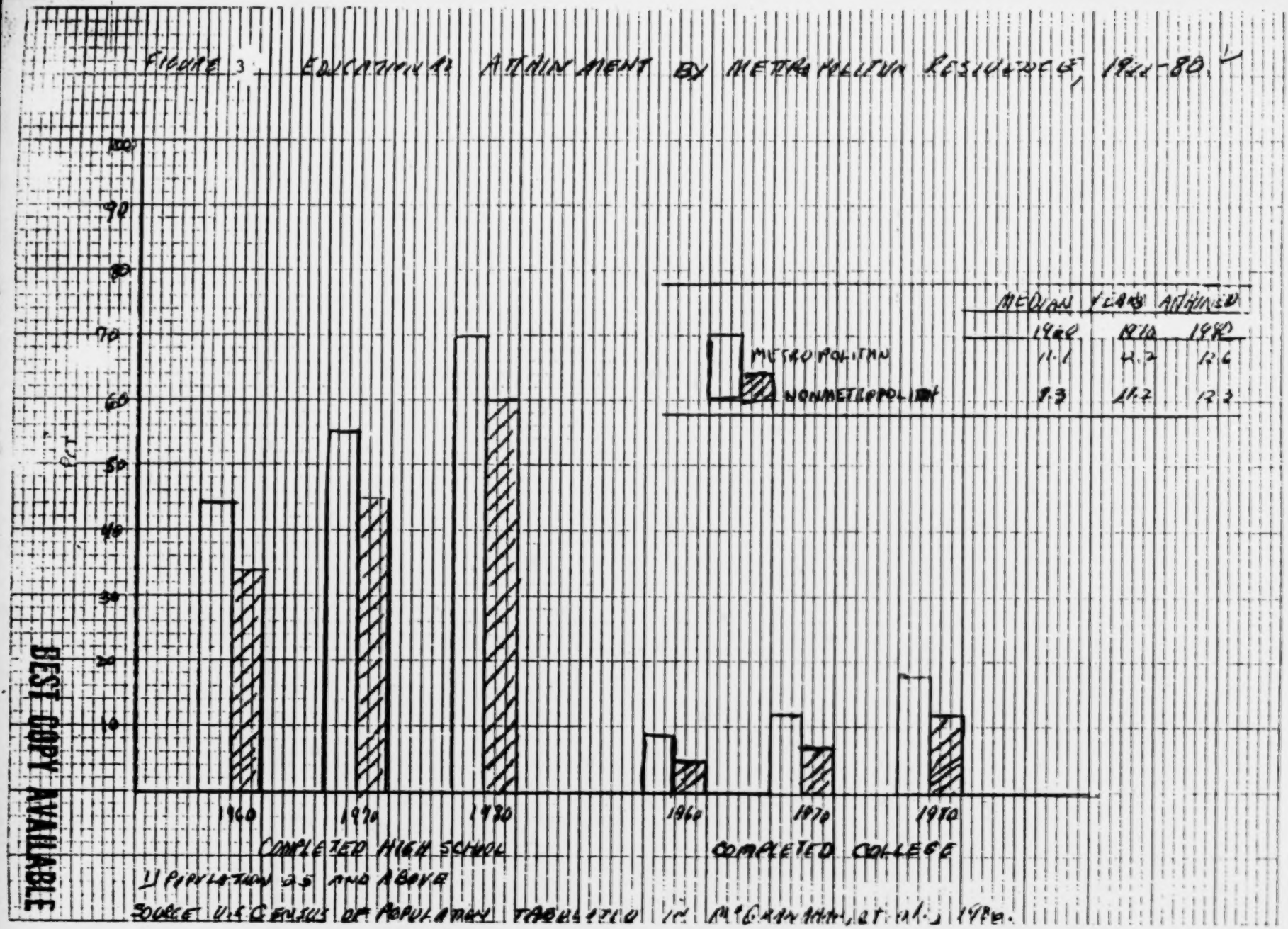


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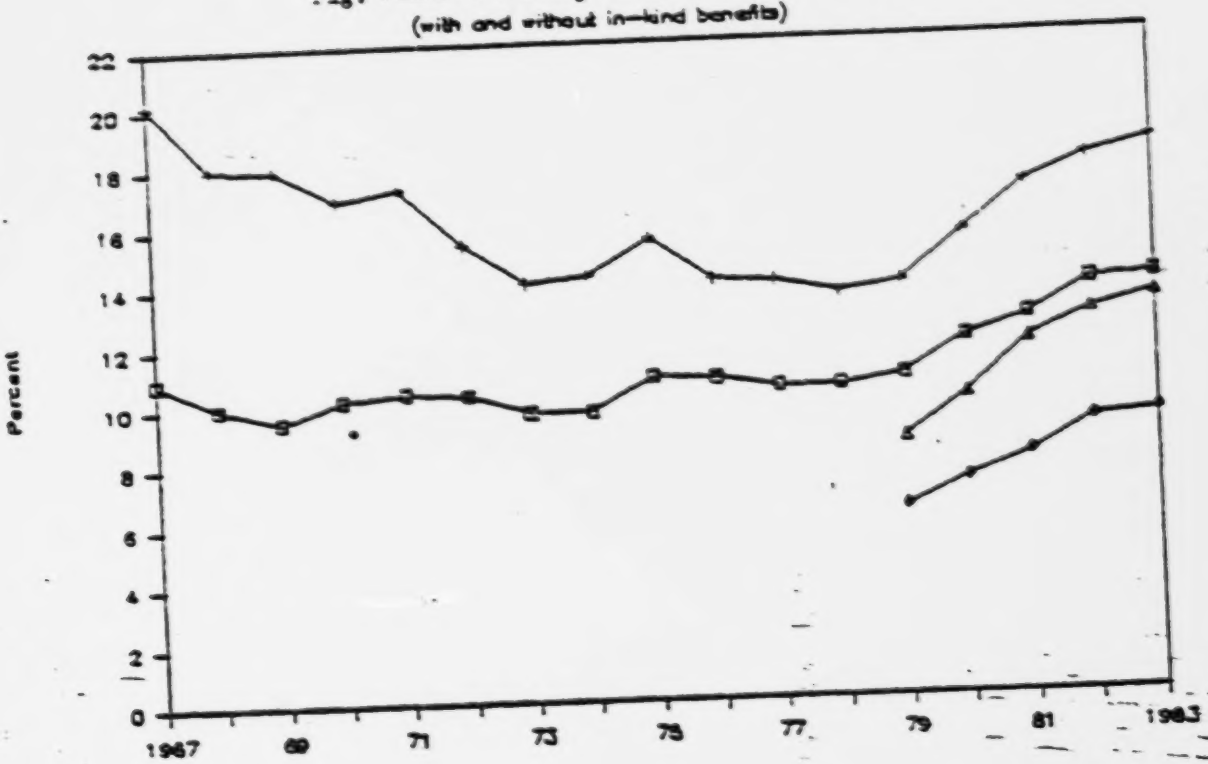
Fig. 4 — Poverty rates, 1967-83

(with and without in-kind benefits)



Metro-nonmetro designations are based on the 1970 Census for 1969 and 1971-83. For other years, metro-nonmetro designations are based on the 1960 Census.

Source: (U.S. Census Bureau, 1969, 1975, 1980, 1981, 1982b, 1984a, and 1985a).

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